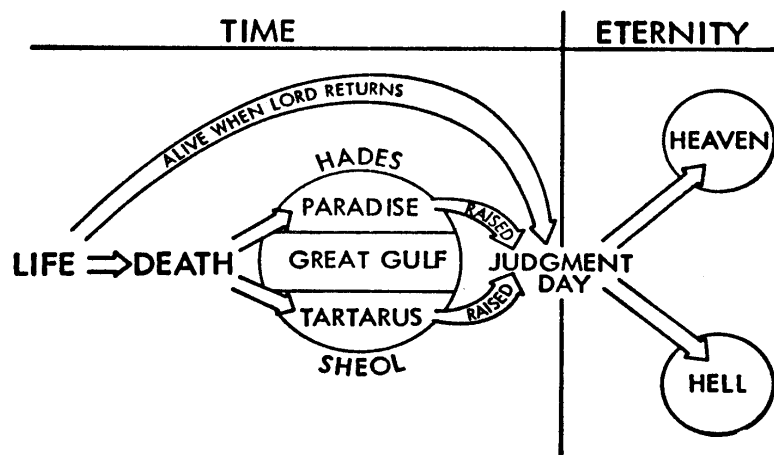


Then follows our unbreakable appointment with the Day of days. There have been many great days in human history. Americans remember Independence Day, July 4, 1776. Now September 11, 2001 has exceeded December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor Day, as “a day that will live in infamy.” But there is coming a day, “the judgment of the great day,” (Jude verse 6) which shall completely exceed all other days of all time. On that monumental day, all the people, both good and bad, of all ages shall come forth from the grave (John 5:28-29)! Abraham and Sarah shall arise from Machpelah. Moses shall come forth from the unknown wilderness grave across from Beth Peor. The oceans shall deliver up the countless millions buried within. The righteous dead shall burst forth from the grave with the shout of victory. All, all from Adam down, shall be raised! All the peoples of all the nations of the earth, including you, my friend, will stand before the Lord to be judged (Matthew 25:31-33). Christ will be the Judge (John 5:22), and His Word the standard of judgment (John 12:48). Reject His tender plea now if you will, but by that same Gospel your destiny will be sealed.

On that day time will end and future eternity will begin (Matthew 25:46). Eternity - what does it mean? Actually, in human terms it is indefinable because it is infinite (unlimited), whereas all within our experience is finite (limited). But, to crudely illustrate its vast sweep, suppose that a tiny house fly were to scrape a minute particle of dust up on one of his little wings and begin the 92,900,000 mile journey to the sun at the rate of one mile per hour, deposit the particle, return to the earth at the same slow pace, and continue this process until the



entirety of our globe, all six sextillion (6 followed by 27 zeros) tons of it, were transported to the sun. How would this compare with eternity? About like the snap of your finger compares to all human history from Adam to the present. And the comparison is inadequate, because, despite the enormity of the time involved, it is finite, not infinite.

If you have not prepared for destiny, you will spend that eternity in a horrible devil’s Hell (Matthew 10:28). The punishment will be terrible beyond human power to describe. Those miserable wretches so utterly condemned will burn without ceasing, with never any hope of relief (Revelation 14:10-11) and will wail and grind their teeth in agony (Matthew 25:30). Their companions forever will be the wicked of the earth (Revelation 21:8) along with man’s vicious adversary, Satan, and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

On the other hand, if you have prepared to meet your destiny, the beauty of an eternal inheritance in Heaven will await you (1 Peter 1:3-5). What joy to spend eternity in that sweet home where we shall never again face the suffering of disease, the heartache of death, or the tears of departure. The loving Father shall tenderly comfort His children forever and ever (Revelation 21:1-5). He shall be our light throughout endless ages, and the curse of sin will be forever lifted. (Revelation 22:5) How blessed to be with the Father (Matthew 5:16), His beloved Son (Hebrews 8:1), the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:12) and the angels of God (Matthew 22:30). How delightful to walk and talk with Abraham, Moses, Ruth, Esther, Mary, Paul, Peter, and all the great men and women of faith from every age (Matthew 25:34). Don’t you long to go there?

Eternity is the common destiny of Adam’s race. Where you spend that eternity is your decision. It depends on what you do with Christ and His Word. You can believe in Him, obey Him, and give your life to Him, and your eternal destiny will be the wonderful joy of heaven. Or you can refuse Him and His Word and suffer for ever in hell. Where will you spend eternity?

Questions for Review

I. True/False

1. _____ The most important thing we can prepare for is retirement.
2. _____ You know how long you will live.

3. _____ You will have a second chance after death to make your life right with God.
4. _____ Compared to eternity, life is very short.
5. _____ Unless Christ returns first, you will die.
6. _____ After death we cease to exist.
7. _____ You will be raised from the dead.
8. _____ You will be judged on the last day.
9. _____ The apostle Peter will be the judge.
10. _____ Your conscience will be the standard by which you will be judged.
11. _____ The righteous will go to heaven.
12. _____ The lost will cease to exist.
13. _____ Where you spend eternity depends on what you do with Christ and His Word.
14. Here is a personal question to ask yourself: Am I prepared for eternity?

I. Matching

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. _____ Sheol | A. place where the blessed dead are comforted |
| 2. _____ Hades | B. indefinable because it is infinite (unlimited) |
| 3. _____ Paradise | C. home of God, place of eternal joy |
| 4. _____ Torments | D. Greek word for the abode of the dead |
| 5. _____ Eternity | E. abode of Satan, place of eternal torment |
| 6. _____ Hell | F. Hebrew word for the abode of the dead |
| 7. _____ Heaven | G. where the lost departed spirits suffer |

Bible Correspondence Course

Lesson Twelve

The Destiny of Man

September 11, 2001, the world watched in horror as terrorists took the lives of almost 3000 people. Thousands of people like us, who hours earlier were beginning a normal work day with no hint of significant danger, were suddenly face to face with their eternal destinies. For many souls who moments earlier were absorbed with job, family, and pleasure, now only one thing mattered - were they right with God? Surely this should cause us to think. Our lives too, in any of a thousand different ways, could be instantly snuffed out. Each of us must face the destiny of his soul. In comparison to this, all other concerns shrink to utter insignificance (Matthew 16:26-27). What is your destiny?

Let us examine destiny from the standpoint of this life. To the young, life seems endless; but both the inspired Word of God and the experience of the aged confirm that our time here is but a fleeting moment (Psalm 103:15-16). Furthermore, human life is so terribly uncertain. While you anticipate many years of work and pleasure, your life could be ended in an instant, as quickly and unpredictably as the vanishing of the morning mist (James 4:13-15). We must also realize there will be no second chance after death to make corrections for a misspent life. Each of us shall be judged by "the things done in the body." (2 Corinthians 5:10) As you consider your life, be realistic. Death is certain (Hebrews 9:27). The only alternative is the possibility the Lord may return while we are still alive (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). Spend your small amount of time here preparing for destiny.

After death, what then? The spirits of all the dead enter a realm known in the Hebrew tongue as "Sheol" and in the Greek as "Hades." (cf. Acts 2:24-27, 31) This realm is variously defined as "the common receptacle of disembodied spirits," "the unseen world," or simply "the abode of the dead." There are two places within this realm, "Paradise," where the blessed dead are comforted (Luke 23:43), and "torments," where the lost departed spirits suffer (Luke 16:19-26). These places are separated by a "great gulf" over which none can cross (Ibid).